

Design Guideline Changes Supported

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TEMPLE TERRACE - Exempting single-family homes from Temple Terrace's proposed design guidelines is among the changes receiving a warm reception by one-time critics.

Temple Terrace officials have been crafting design guidelines to shape future aesthetics of commercial and residential buildings in the city's 225-acre community redevelopment area, or CRA, along North 56th Street. The first public hearing was Tuesday before the city council.

"These guidelines have come a long way since I first saw them," Alex Ratensky, a resident who serves on the city's Redevelopment Task Force, told the council. "It will do the job we need done and I would not have said that in December."

It has been more than three months since the city rolled out a consultant's report outlining the proposal.

The guidelines are meant to foster the kind of development the city council envisions at the site of a blighted shopping area at Bullard Parkway and North 56th Street and areas stretching south to the Hillsborough River, said Redevelopment Director Ralph Bosek. City leaders' vision for that land in the CRA is a mixed-use, New Urbanism project incorporating Mediterranean design and multistory buildings with offices and residences on upper floors and retail businesses at ground level.

Dozens of residents and property owners in the CRA have weighed in since the proposed guidelines were made public, and changes have resulted, including a decision to exempt single-family homes.

Previously, all of the 180 property owners in the CRA interested in extensive remodeling or building new structures would have been forced to abide by the guidelines, which call for expensive details such as stucco facades, wrought-iron fences and specific roof and window styles.

"So if an act of God happens and Mrs. Smith wants to rebuild her house exactly as it was, she can do that?" Councilman Frank Chillura asked during the hearing.

"Yes," Bosek said.

Yet not everyone is pleased.

Bosek read aloud a letter from Buddy Hurwit, whose family owns the building on North 56th Street that houses Hollywood Video. Hurwit asked the council to reject the guidelines.

During a meeting in March, Hurwit expressed concerns about owners being forced to make expensive improvements that will result in higher rent that the market cannot sustain. His letter raised similar concerns.

Members of the city council have expressed receptiveness to the guidelines and could vote to approve them in May.

Although it appears Hurwit and others, who previously said they share his worries, will be forced to comply, Councilman Ron Govin said the city has done a good job of addressing many issues raised by property owners.

"This document and the one we looked at three months ago are very different, and I am impressed," he said.

"I think we need to pass this for many reasons."

